

One Ocean into administration

ONE Ocean Expeditions (OOE) overnight advised customers it is set to be placed into administration and has confirmed its upcoming 17 Jan "Ultimate Antarctica" departure would not take place.

The company has not operated any voyages since Oct 2019, with its *RCGS Resolute* impounded in Argentina over a payment dispute.

However, since then OOE has continued to solicit bookings on its website, while telling customers on cancelled cruises it would provide a "future cruise credit" rather than any refunds.

The company claims to have entered into a partnership with another unnamed "high quality expedition operator" to provide customers with options to book for a discounted price.

Passengers may also attempt to seek a refund of monies paid to OOE, which will occur via a "business administration process overseen by a court appointed Monitor/Trustee".

"Alternatively, as OOE will soon enter a formal restructuring process (business administration) under the Canadian legal system, you may be able to seek refunds through the cancellation terms of your travel insurance policy," the company said, offering to provide supporting documentation to assist any claims.

More details in today's issue of **Cruise Weekly** - subscribe free at cruiseweekly.com.au.

Excite suspends bookings

EXCLUSIVE

ONLINE wholesaler Excite Holidays has stopped taking bookings on its website, with Managing Director Nicholas Stavropoulos saying the measure is because the company is in the "final stages of commercial discussions" (**TD** breaking news).

In an update to Excite staff yesterday, Stavropoulos said he would be able to provide more detail within 24 hours, after earlier this week telling **TD** "an exciting deal is in the works".

Although new bookings are

not being accepted, Excite's call centre is still managing queries about existing reservations, albeit with extended wait times and advice that customers should remit payment directly to suppliers and "lodge a service complaint" with Excite.

Hundreds of clients have been disrupted in recent weeks (**TD** 02 Jan), arriving with prepaid Excite vouchers refused by suppliers.

Interestingly, a number of **TD** readers have now received emails from Las Vegas-based Bonotel Exclusive Travel, offering to take over bookings "under the same economics" and collect payment directly from the agents.

"It seems to me that the travellers will be disputing the charge to Excite Holidays with their credit card companies, so the result should be no financial harm to traveller," the email from Bonotel Chief Financial Officer, Marlo Vandemore reads.

There was speculation earlier this week (**TD** 08 Jan) that there was a deal in the wings with Bonotel, with whom Excite already has a close relationship.

MEANWHILE a number of other operators have stepped in to assist agents with impacted Excite Holidays bookings - see **page two**.

PS flt "shot down"

UKRAINE International Airlines flight 752 was likely shot down by an Iranian surface-to-air missile, according to reported US intelligence.

United States and Canadian officials, including Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, confirmed their suspicions this morning, with US officials telling *Newsweek* the incident was probably an accident.

Sources also told CBS that US intelligence detected anti-aircraft radars turning on before the crash, and that satellites detected two infrared blips, thought to be SA-15 missiles, followed by another blip, thought to be the aircraft exploding.

Iran has denied responsibility, with a rep of the military refuting the claims militaristic action caused the crash.

Hayman trade deal

HAYMAN Island by InterContinental is currently offering the travel trade 40% off Feb and Mar stays.

Rates start at \$360 a night, and include daily buffet breakfast for two, in-room wi-fi access and more - see the **back page**.

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Bushfire appeal

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line Holdings has committed \$250,000 to the Australian Red Cross Disaster Relief and Recovery Fund, with APT Travel Group (ATG) also joining the bushfire relief and recovery efforts by donating \$130,000 through its charitable fund, One Tomorrow.

ATG employees in the Cheltenham, Vic office will also host a raft of events to support the cause, including a recycle boutique, a barbecue and a raffle.

Aspen Snowmass Ski Resort will donate over \$100,000 in auction prizes to Snowbest for a silent auction, in addition to launching the Australia Wildlife Relief Fund, which will see it match up to US\$12,500 (AU\$18,233) of donations - **CLICK HERE**.

Singapore Airlines is also supporting the bushfire appeal, donating \$100,000 to the Red Cross Disaster Relief and Recovery appeal.

Malaysia Airlines, alongside its sister company Malaysia Aviation Group, has announced its support, donating 1 Malaysian Ringgit per passenger flown by the airline in Jan.

And Fullerton Hotels & Resorts, which recently debuted in Sydney, has pledged \$60,000 to the NSW Rural Fire Service and St Vincent de Paul.

Meanwhile, Chimu Adventures has raised \$2,600 to support bushfire victims by auctioning off tickets to a performance by Elton John at Hope Estate in the NSW Hunter Valley this weekend.

Viva offers Excite hotline

HELLOWORLD Travel's Viva Holidays/ReadyRooms wholesale division has acted swiftly in the wake of yesterday's closure of Excite Holidays' booking website (see **page one**), this morning implementing a dedicated phone number to assist affected agents.

Helloworld Executive Director, Cinzia Burnes, told **TD** "we intend to provide any assistance necessary to minimise the financial impact to agents".

She said Viva was also most importantly focused on ensuring that the clients are not inconvenienced.

The special hotline, on 1300 552 323, will allow agents to check both Tango and ReadyRooms prices with the assistance of one of the wholesaler's dedicated

operations team, Burnes said.

She added the hotline is now fully operational and ready to handle agent enquiries.

MEANWHILE Greece and Mediterranean Travel Centre (GMTC) has also urged agents with Excite Greece bookings to make contact as soon as possible.

"We have great rates and relations with thousands of hotels in Greece, and we can also arrange all other services such as ferry tickets, transfers and a variety of tours," said GMTC MD Halina Kubica.

She noted the ATAS-accredited and CATO member company had a dedicated office in Athens to provide assistance to clients 24/7.

Enquiries are being accepted on 1300 661 666 or via email on info@greecemedtravel.com.au.

"Currently there is no waiting time on the phone," Kubica said.

Eurail Pass changes

ESTONIA, Latvia and the Thello train between France and Italy are just some of the new inclusions in the 2020 Eurail Pass.

The pass now includes a total of 33 countries, with those travelling by ferry from Riga to Germany or Stockholm, or from Tallinn to Helsinki or Stockholm, entitled to up to 50% off ferry connections.

People younger than 28 can now also travel for up to 25% off the standard adult price.

The Rail Planner application has also been updated, with new features including updated timetables, a new look and new display features.



Window Seat

PEOPLE who aspire to live in or around a tourist attraction know what they're in for - travellers all hours of the day.

However, residents of the Highbridge neighbourhood in the Bronx in New York City have begun competing with a sudden influx of visitors, with a flight of stairs featured in the new *Joker* film receiving an inundation of travellers.

Burger King has taken notice, issuing free burgers to all Bronx residents to help them cope, when they use a code to order through UberEats.

Last month, Burger King handed out Whoppers to pax whose flights had been delayed.

New APT UK role

APT has made a key new appointment in the UK, with Katie Elson taking the newly created role of Head of Marketing Transformation.

Elson was previously Head of Marketing, Creative and Content for the collapsed Thomas Cook.

CX A350s for SYD

CATHAY Pacific is set to deploy Airbus A350-900XWB on its CX111/110 and CX101/100 services between Sydney and Hong Kong effective from 29 Mar 2020, according to GDS screens, replacing A330s and 777s.

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Travelmarvel marvels China



TRAVELMARVEL and Great Rail Journeys recently hosted a group of agents on a 10-day rail journey through China.

Karen Newbury & Lani Harvey from APT Travel Group (ATG) hosted the Travelmarvel Top Achievers as reward & recognition for their support of the brand.

Visiting Beijing, Xi'an and Chengdu, the itinerary included a Yangtze River cruise as well as visits to the Great Wall of China and the Terracotta Army.



Pictured **top**, the group stands atop China at the Great Wall, and **middle**, famil hosts ATG Queensland Manager Karen Newbury and ATG Inside Sales Event Coordinator Lani Harvey say "ni hao" to a group of palace maids in traditional dress.

Qatar expands

QATAR Airways has expanded its frequency for European destinations, which will see additional flights to Dublin, Lisbon, London and Malaga.

Flights from DOH to AGP will increase from five to seven flights per week during Jul and Aug, DOH to DUB will increase from 11 to 14 times a week between Jul and Oct, DOH to LGW will expand from 14 to 18 per week in Apr, Jun and Oct, and DOH to LIS will increase from seven to 13 flights per week from Jun.

Chedi Club rebrand

GHD Hotels' Chedi Club Ubud in Bali will re-launch this month as Tanah Gajah, the flagship resort of new Indonesia-based group Hadiprana Hospitality.

The resort will feature a new tapas lounge.

Puerto Rico quake

DFAT has advised Australians travelling to Puerto Rico to monitor local media and follow the advice of local authorities after a 6.4-magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of the region on Tue.

The earthquake caused structural damage and power outages in the south-west of the island.

Virtuoso best list

VIRTUOSO has revealed key trends for its members in its 2020 Best of the Best catalogue.

The directory contains listings for over 1,400 luxury hotels across the globe in over 100 countries and is being distributed to 150,000 Virtuoso clients around the globe.

The catalogue also highlights trends in hotels which Virtuoso has identified, including a rise in travellers seeking out small luxury properties and hotels are implementing initiatives as travellers increasingly prioritise sustainability as a greater factor in their travel decisions.

Is the big bird dead? And what's next for aircraft builders? Find out in the December issue of *travelBulletin*.



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TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

Today's Technology Update is brought to you by Stuba Pacific



"Technology in 2020..." was once something we said when we dreamed about the future. 2020 is today.

The CIO role involves matching technology to customer needs based on what you know about them and the industry. "Bells and whistles" distraction is a fine line from product evolution. But you do have to grow and change.

Over the past decade, STUBA has been conservative on implementing massive UI changes and functions. We think to have over 50 live supplier connections in the guts of the system is amazing, but to you is very boring and sounds very "beige". But that's what drives our sharp pricing, reliability and customer service.

Our technology is all about being reliable, seldom sexy, never shocking and like a family car, to start first time every time. It doesn't mean we don't fantasise about upgrading to a Maserati, but wholesale travel technology is about efficient A to B.

"Making Beige Shine" is STUBA's own little joke on ourselves but it's reflective of what we believe the trend will be in travel tech in the 2020s; a greater focus on reliability, function, accessibility and trust; the agent is the bell and whistle.

Mark Luckey,
CIO, Stuba



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ANA HONU A380

ALL Nippon Airways (ANA) will launch the third of its "Flying Honu" Airbus A380s (*TD* 21 May 2019) on 01 Jul.

The move will allow the airline to service its twice daily Narita-Honolulu route solely with these new aircraft, which feature a Hawaiian-inspired design.

Pax demand up

THE International Air Transport Association (IATA) has revealed its Nov stats, which indicate passenger demand rose by 3.3% in Nov compared to the same month in 2018, but has stayed the same since Oct.

The data also showed capacity (available seat kilometres) increased by 1.8%, and load factor climbed by 1.1% to 81.1%, which was a record for any Nov.

IHG initiative

INTERCONTINENTAL Hotels Group (IHG) has introduced new programs, tools and resources for its staff to increase awareness and aid prevention of human trafficking, in light of National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, which is recognised in Jan in the US.

Staff in more than 2,300 IHG hotels across the US, Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean have completed the company's online anti-human trafficking training, launched last year, with the company expecting all staff in its hotels in the region to complete the training by Mar.

"We are committed to protecting our guests, communities and owners from the impact of human trafficking as well as maintaining the integrity of IHG's brands," said IHG Americas CEO Elie Maalouf.

Emirates, Aus Open partner up



EMIRATES is now the Associate Partner of the Australian Open (AO), as well as the Official International Airline, after renewing its "highly successful partnership" in a multi-year deal with the annual tennis tournament.

Emirates Day at the Australian Open will take place on 21 Jan, where it will present the expanded AO Ballpark along with the popular Kids Tennis Day.

"Few events have become such an ingrained fixture on the national sporting calendar as the Australian Open, and over the past five years Emirates and Tennis Australia have worked successfully to connect people to this exciting tournament," said Emirates Divisional Vice President Australasia Barry Brown.

The AO will take place at Melbourne Park from 20 Jan to 02 Feb, with tickets now on sale.

Pictured: Emirates Regional Sales Manager VIC/SA/WA & TAS Dean Cleaver and Australian professional tennis star Daria Gavrilova.

Travelport AI deal

TRAVELPORT has confirmed its contract with Air India (AI) has been "fully implemented" on 01 Jan, making it the only global distribution system (GDS) provider through which travel agents in India can receive both Air India's domestic and international flight content.

The contract was awarded to Travelport after a competitive bidding process (*TD* 12 Oct 2018), and came into effect in Nov 2018.

Travelport also continues to provide all domestic and int'l flight content from the carrier to its global network of travel agents.

Earlier this week Amadeus announced it would provide Air India's full range of content globally, except in India, where sellers could only access the carrier's international content, due to a deal with Travelport (*TD* 07 Jan).

Last week Air India exited the Sabre global distribution system, following a 20-year relationship (*TD* 06 Jan).

TRAVEL SPECIALS

WELCOME to Travel Specials, *Travel Daily's* Friday feature. If your firm has released a travel special you'd like to make the industry aware of, send the details to specials@traveldaily.com.au

Savings of 10% are available across the entire range of small group tours with **Small Group Touring Co.** Deals are valid on all of the company's tours throughout Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, South America and the United Kingdom & Ireland. The Summer Sale lasts until the end of Feb. For details, phone on 1800 865 285.

The Northern Territory's **Groote Eylandt Lodge** in the Gulf of Carpentaria is offering a discounted rate on its three-night Fishing Safari. Normally priced from \$3,700pp, the new discounted rate is from \$3,145pp. The deal is valid for bookings until 31 Jan for travel 01 Jun and 31 Oct. For more information, call 0412 239 633.

Book a Basque Country 2021 cruise with Adventure Canada through **Cruise Traveller** to access savings of up to US\$3,300 per couple. Valid for bookings made by 01 Jun. Call 1800 507 777 for more.

Luxury Sri Lankan hotel **Water Garden Sigiriya** has released a deal, offering guests a complimentary third night of accommodation when booking for two nights. The deal applies to stays from 01 Mar to 15 Jul. For details, phone on 02 9211 6590.

Oman Air Italy deal

OMAN Air has debuted its first US codeshare flights, partnering with Air Italy on services from Muscat to Miami and New York City via Muscat.

The agreement will see Oman Air place its code on Air Italy's daily roundtrip flights from Milan-New York City and six-times-weekly flight from Milan-Miami.

The carrier also said it expected to add additional destinations in the United States in time for summer.



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For further information or to book your stay, please call +61 07 5501 9992 or email hayman.reservations@ihg.com.

*Offer is available for all travel industry representatives and applies only for stays during February and March 2020. Room discount of 40% applies to all room types and is subject to availability. A minimum 3 night stay applies. Launch transfers are additional and are priced at \$210 one way per person, \$105 per child (4-16 years). Offer applies to room rate and breakfast only, all other meals and activities are charged at full price and are additional. Proof of travel industry identification required upon booking. www.haymanisland.intercontinental.com